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AIRGRAM

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

A-449

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TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 IN : DEPT PLEASE PASS: ~~DEPT~~;
 Ambassies SAN JOSE, MANAGUA;
 T. TUCIGALPA, SAN SALVADOR;
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INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
 APR 30 1966

DATE: April 16, 1966

FROM : Ambembassy GUATEMALA

SUBJECT: Monthly Guerrilla Report--March

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/AF

REF :

REVIEWED BY *Eay* DATE 7 OCT 1966
 PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

March was a significant month for the extreme left in Guatemala, since its predictions failed to materialize and since it suffered rather severe set-backs from GOC forces. As a result, March was also a relatively quiet month, at least during the latter two weeks, and it would appear as if the extremists if not dispirited, at least are awaiting further developments in Guatemala's political scene.

Ideological Set-Back

Prior to the March 6 general elections, there were indications that the extreme left was anxious for them to take place, since it was convinced the Peralta Government would never permit an opposition candidate to win and would "impose" his choice for the Presidency, Juan de Dios Aguilar. This "imposition," thought the extreme left, would bring the masses out into the streets in protest, and although the banner would be carried by the Partido Revolucionario (PR), it would not take long for extremists to infiltrate the crowds, take over their management, and provoke another "Dominican situation." Power would polarize to the extreme right and the extreme left, and the latter's goal of taking over Guatemala would be advanced by at least several years.

To the surprise of many, of course, the anticipated did not occur and by the end of the month, there was every indication that Peralta did indeed intend to hold to his word and deliver the Government to the party which won the elections, the PR. To complicate matters further for the extreme left, it had even instructed its followers to vote for the PR in an effort to boost the claim of fraud which the PGT/FAR had assumed would take place, even though this support was on a "lesser of three evils" basis. The PGT/FAR envisioned the

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elections as a vehicle to assure massive and exploitable unrest.

After it became apparent that the PR really did win and would not be blocked by the military regime, the Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajo (PGT-the Communist Party) began hedging its statements to protect itself should it choose to act against the PR. While reiterating that it doubted the PR could or would ever do anything to help Guatemala, it also made clear that if the PR made any deals with the Army, or kept up the anti-guerrilla struggle, or in other ways gave any indications of simply pursuing present GOG policies vis-a-vis the extremists, the PGT would turn to increasing violence to bring "popular revolution" to Guatemala.

In any event, it appears as if the PGT may reduce its activities for the time being at least. Unless the PR provokes it some way, the PGT seems momentarily willing to let the PR have "a try" at Government, and to attempt to subvert this even before the PR has taken office could be a bad "public relations" move. The big question will probably be to what extent can the PGT make its violent elements go along with this decision. There have always been indications that the party leaders have not always been able to control the party's youth wing (JPT) and for that matter its guerrilla arm, the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR) which has stated its long-term struggle will continue regardless of elections.

Strikes Against the Extremists

At the very beginning of the month, the GOG security forces scored a considerable success against the extremists in one of the most significant round-ups of PGT (and, in fact, MR-13) leaders in some time. Somewhat confusing the reports is the fact that the GOG officially has remained completely silent about the matter, despite rumors and press stories about the capture of anywhere from a dozen to 26 top communists. Adding to the confusion have been several news stories reporting the exile to neighboring countries of up to forty Guatemalans, mostly political prisoners.

[REDACTED] stories regarding the capture and subsequent execution [REDACTED] reported in the press. [REDACTED]

There are some rumors that the capture of the PGT members resulted from information given to the police by the rival guerrilla group, the MR-13.

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However, as mentioned above, it is still relatively unknown how much actual control the PCP has over the JPT and the FAR. Certainly, it has not control over the actions of the MR-13, which never even particularly agreed to support elections, and in fact seemed opposed to them. As a result, although some elements among the extremists may be willing to act peacefully at least for a few months, this does not mean that peace and tranquility will necessarily reign.

Other Events

The University Student Association (AEU) received considerable publicity during the month for two reasons. In the first instance, the AEU publicized in Guatemala the jailing of Guatemalans in Honduras, and subsequently sent a committee of students to Honduras to try to obtain their release. While returning from Tegucigalpa empty-handed, their counter-parts in Honduras carried on with the legalities of the matter, and apparently did succeed in obtaining the release of some 60 prisoners in the Honduran jails (see Honduras Cable 137 to Department).

Secondly, the AEU supported efforts at a demonstration scheduled for March 29 to protest the denial of "human rights" in Guatemala. The GOG refused permission for any public parading or other demonstration, and the potentially troublesome efforts of the students fizzled. The same happened to students' plans for the traditional "Huelga de Dolores" on April 1 (see Embtel 723).

On the evening of March 12, several men who identified themselves as members of the FAR raided the studios of Radio Centroamericana in Guatemala City, and forced the partial broadcast of an appeal for the release of the above-mentioned captured communists. They escaped before police could arrive at the studios.

Otherwise, the month was relatively quiet. No new anti-guerrilla campaign was mounted by the Army, and although there were reportedly a few incidents and clashes with guerrillas in the Zacapa-Izabal area, these have not been confirmed in detail. Nor was there any further evidence of extremist activity on the Pacific littoral.

For the Ambassador:

Edward V. Nef
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Second Secretary of Embassy

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